



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2026 - 2031



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Introduction

EDI in a changing external environment

Edge Hill was founded as the first non-denominational teacher training college for women, breaking traditional barriers and advancing opportunities for women in education. Today, our university colours and graduation gowns continue to proudly reflect the colours of the suffrage movement. From our early days in pioneering gender equity, to our commitment today to supporting and amplifying people from all backgrounds, Edge Hill University is a place where equity, diversity and inclusion continue to shape who we are and what we stand for as a university. As Chief Student and Governance Officer, I am proud to launch our new EDI strategy, which deepens the core values set out in the University Strategy 2026-2031 ‘Our Connected Futures’.

This strategy complements the University Strategy, with a specific focus on how we will embed equity, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing into our core systems, decisions, culture, and communities. Through this, we will ensure positive impact for students and staff through clear aspiration, action, and accountability. EDI should not be considered an add-on and our strategy highlights how EDI will be embedded as institutional infrastructure.

This strategy reflects our growth as a sector-leading institution in this area, underpinned by cutting-edge expert research and a commitment to reach all groups of society. The review of the previous EDI Strategy, informed by staff and student views, reflects an institution that has grown in maturity and confidence. Now, we embrace the opportunity to move from our previous strengths towards greater consistency, clarity, and long-term sustainability in an ever-changing world. Our EDI principles drive us to contribute actively to the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals by addressing inequality, discrimination, and unequal access to opportunities.

The higher education sector continues to evolve, with increasing expectations on universities around risk, governance, transparency, accountability, and evidence of impact. EDI now sits within a national context that is more challenging and more visible than in previous years, with growing expectations on universities to show how they support students and staff, manage risk, and deliver value.

At the same time, students and colleagues are dealing with real and practical pressures, including rising living costs, health and wellbeing concerns, access to digital systems, and questions of identity and belonging. These experiences often overlap, shaping how people engage with the University day to day. For our international students, these challenges can also include adapting to new cultural and academic environments and building a sense of community while studying far from home. We acknowledge that they require clear, joined-up responses from leaders. At Edge Hill University, we respond by focusing on people first, and by listening and working in partnership with staff networks and student panels.

This EDI strategy emerges in an increasingly polarised national context. The University affirms its commitment to freedom of expression, academic inquiry, and respectful debate, alongside our responsibility to uphold dignity inclusion, and wellbeing. We do not view these principles as a site of tension; rather, they create the conditions for meaningful learning, critical conversations, and reflective participation.

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Celebrating progress since our previous strategy



Over the lifetime of our previous Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy (2021–2025), Edge Hill University has made meaningful progress in embedding equity into policy, practice, and culture. We are proud of the collective effort across our community that has delivered tangible change for both staff and students.

Our progress reflects a shift from compliance to culture. Indeed, we have moved from using the term ‘equality’, where everyone is treated the same, to using the term ‘equity’, where everyone is treated fairly. The term ‘equality’ still holds specific legal protections and implications, so it is essential that both ‘equality’ and ‘equity’ remain a focus. While we see compliance as a necessary and important regulatory benchmark, we remain committed to reach beyond this to create a thriving culture of welcome, belonging, and wellbeing. We believe this is a more strategic approach, placing equity, diversity, wellbeing, and inclusion at the heart of the staff and student experience.

Key achievements during the period of our last strategy (2021–2025) include:

- Strengthening of student inclusion and success through our Access and Participation Plan, inclusive curriculum development, improved campus facilities (including faith and prayer spaces), and strengthened partnerships between EDI, academic teams, and student services.
- The development of best practice on ‘cultural inclusion and equity in the curriculum and in teaching’.
- Strengthening workforce diversity, with continued year-on-year growth in colleagues identifying as Black, Asian or from minority ethnic backgrounds and an increase in staff declaring disabilities, placing us above local benchmarks.
- Gender equity outcomes, including a sustained 0% Gender Bonus Pay Gap for five consecutive years and a narrowing of the Mean Gender Pay Gap.
- The launch and success of the EDI Innovation Fund, enabling funding for grassroots research-informed and impactful University-wide projects.
- The development of the Accessibility Maturity Model, to assess accessibility of digital platforms.
- Expansion of staff networks (LGBTQI+, Menopause Network, Carers Network, Staff Disability & Neurodiversity Network, Staff Multicultural Network, Working Parents Network, New and Expectant Parents/Infant Feeding Network, Fertility Network)
- Retention of status as a Disability Confident employer.
- Introduction of an independent Employee Assistance Programme for staff, to provide 24/7 confidential support in relation to wellbeing, legal and financial matters, as well as tools to support wellbeing. This is complemented by Elevate, our new and enhanced health and wellbeing programme.
- Policy and practice improvements, including enhanced family-friendly policies, Equality Impact Assessment training, inclusive recruitment processes, and the development of Supporting Staff to Support Students (SSSS) toolkits.
- The launch and success of our Women’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy, delivering a reduction in long-term absence for women and informing sector-wide best practice through the nationally recognised Maternity Returners Project.
- The development of aspiring female leaders with external training through Advance HE’s Aurora Leadership Programme.
- A strong track record in attracting and supporting a diverse student body.
- The establishment of EDI committees and leadership across all academic departments and faculties.
- The introduction of EDI Ambassadors.
- The launch and funding of RIMES (Research Internships for Minority Ethnic Students), to address the under-representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic students in research degrees, supported by a dedicated fund that helps them access career enhancing opportunities.
- The launch of Thrive, a welcoming and inclusive Student Success programme for foundation and first-year students from backgrounds that are traditionally under-represented at university.
- The launch of an EDI Hub as a central resource for guidance, training, and support.
- The inclusion of a Culture Calendar Club into staff and student systems.
- Athena Swan success:

Edge Hill University	Bronze	2023
Faculty of Education	Bronze	2021
Sport and Physical Activity	Bronze	2021
Computer Science	Bronze	2023
Psychology	Bronze	2024
School of Law, Criminology and Policing	Bronze	2025
Business School	Bronze	2025
History, Geography & Social Sciences	Bronze	2025

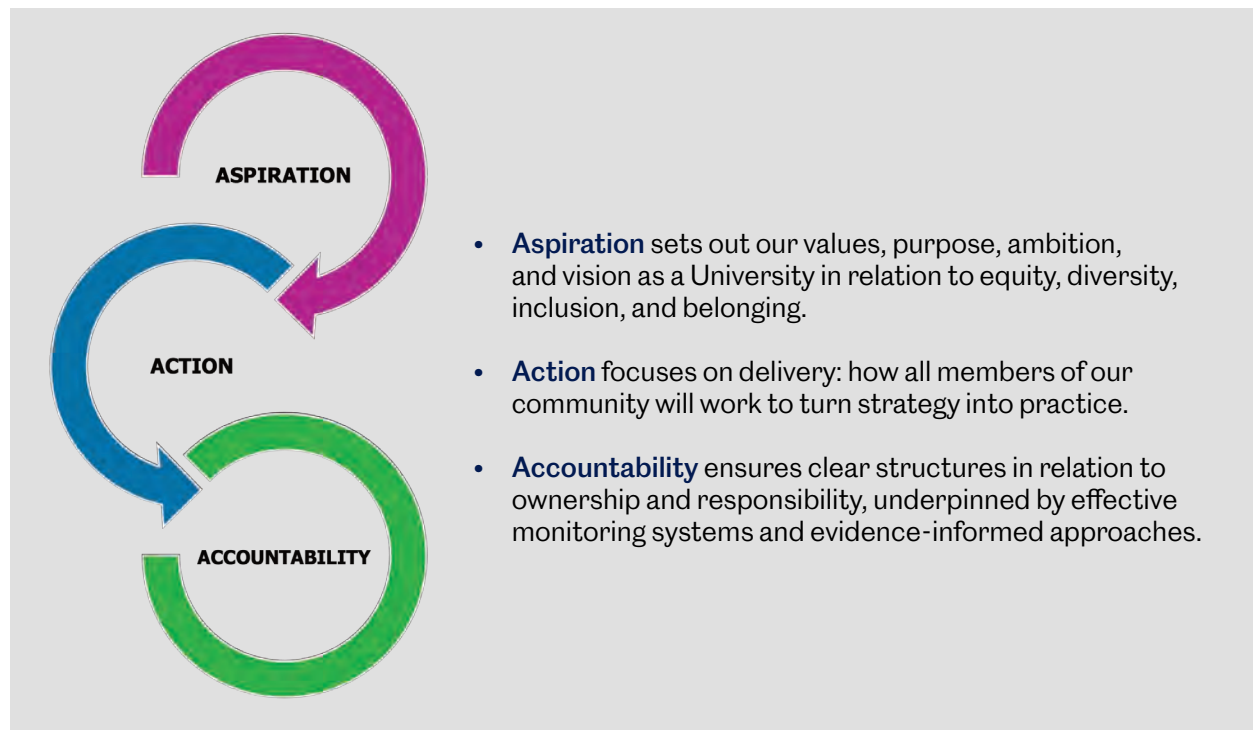
Nationally recognised frameworks and external benchmarking, including Athena Swan and other equality charters, inform our work. These provide critical challenge and assurance, as we continue to engage in robust self-assessment and action planning processes.

Yet, while we celebrate the achievements above, we are candid and ambitious that there is still much more to do. As we move into the next phase of our EDI journey, we will build on these firm foundations, with a renewed focus on measurable impact, lived experience, attention to voice, and sustainable cultural change.

Our EDI Vision: Aspiration. Action. Accountability.

Strategy Overview

Our EDI strategy is structured around a simple, connected framework that documents the shift from vision to impact. This reflects the key principle of the University strategy (2026-2031) of 'ideas into action'.



Our EDI strategy uses a theory of change approach to connect these elements. The theory of change approach helps us to identify the conditions required for success, ensuring that our interventions are evidence-informed, targeted, and resourced. This helps us articulate how our activities lead to meaningful outcomes for staff, students, our community, and our external partners. Combined, these systems focus on reducing inequity across the whole university experience.

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion priorities span four interconnected areas:

- **Students:** enabling belonging, success, and equitable outcomes.
- **Staff:** supporting inclusive practice, development, and wellbeing.
- **Culture:** shaping environments where dignity, respect, and shared responsibility are embedded.
- **Research, Enterprise, and Knowledge Exchange:** advancing inclusive knowledge, participation, environments, and impact.

Together, these priorities provide a coherent framework for action, ensuring EDI is not treated as a standalone activity, but integrated across education, people, culture, and scholarship.



Aspiration

Edge Hill University has a long-standing commitment to widening opportunity and supporting students from all backgrounds to succeed. In 2026, over 80% of our undergraduate students are from groups traditionally under-represented in higher education. We are proud that this reflects both our civic mission and our identity as a university rooted in equity, access, and social mobility.

Over recent years, we have strengthened the student learning journey from application to induction, through continuation and attainment, to progression and beyond graduation. The University's Widening Access and Student Success Strategy (WASS) and Access and Participation Plan (APP) further reflect our institutional values and commitment to fairness, inclusion, and student success. Combined, these plans detail our shared targets and ambition in creating meaningful change and improve outcomes across the student lifecycle for students who have been historically under-represented in higher education.

This EDI Strategy complements this work by setting out the cultural, educational, and organisational conditions to enable student success, ensuring equity is embedded consistently across the student experience. This is reflected in the University strategy's (2026-2031) principles of 'your education, your future', 'place and belonging' and 'professional futures'.

Students share their views with the University in a range of ways, including through course representation, surveys, feedback processes, and targeted listening activity, alongside dedicated initiatives such as Student Insights and partnership-based models such as Student Advisory Panels. These developments have enabled a more coordinated, evidence-informed system of listening to and working with students most at risk of inequity of opportunity. Equally, they have helped to amplify the experiences of students whose voices can otherwise remain hidden within the wider student cohort. While the University prioritises these outcomes, our students tell us that success is more than academic outcomes alone. Student success equally depends on dignity, belonging, and inclusion as key factors in improving attainment.

Edge Hill's Students' Union continues to serve as a democratic representative body that works to strengthen and amplify student voice across academic, professional and student services. The Students' Union is an important delivery partner for culture change that places students at the core of University business.

Accordingly, this strategy recognises a shift from one-size-fits-all approaches towards a more holistic, intersectional, and aligned partnership-based model of student success, grounded in our theory of change.



Our Theory of Change

Insight: Alongside our strong access and student success outcomes, we recognise that some students may continue to experience multiple, intersecting barriers related to belonging, wellbeing, accessibility, and representation. Understanding these realities enables us to strengthen the conditions that support equitable success for all.

We believe that student experience and success improve when we:

- foster belonging, wellbeing, safety, and support for all students;
- use data and feedback to identify, reduce, and close gaps and improve outcomes;
- engage with evaluation activity to understand what works;
- ensure curriculum, teaching, and assessment are inclusive by design;
- move from consultation with students to co-creation;
- equip staff through clear frameworks, resources, and shared responsibility for inclusive practice.

These actions create the conditions for:

- increased student engagement and confidence;
- improved continuation and attainment;
- stronger progression outcomes.

Which in turn enables:

- sustained and sustainable reductions in equity gaps;
- improved lived experience across the student journey.

Action

Building on our strong foundations, we will focus on four interlinked key priorities:

1. Belonging, Safety, and Lived Experience

- We will prioritise student belonging, wellbeing, safety, and support as core determinants of success. This includes strengthening our inclusive campus culture, addressing experiences of marginalisation, and ensuring student voice informs our support systems.
- We will integrate trauma-informed approaches across University life, from application to alumni.
- We recognise that repeated disclosure of identity or circumstances can create emotional exhaustion and barriers to inclusion. We will seek to develop a 'tell us once' process, where possible, enabling systems that mean students will only need to disclose aspects of their identity once for integration across processes.

2. Student Voice

- To avoid tokenism of student voice, we will continue to increase systems of co-creation with students, where appropriate, rather than consultation alone.
- Through academic feedback mechanisms, Student Insights, Student Advisory Panels, and the Students' Union, we will empower student voice across the student journey, recognising their expertise of lived experience.
- We will coordinate evaluation of student voice and insight from across student voice and listening activities.

3. Inclusive Education by Design

- EDI will be embedded in all curricula, teaching, learning, assessment, quality, and monitoring processes.
- The University will mobilise its research and experience-based expertise to support local continuing professional development on EDI.
- Staff will be supported through clear validation and quality processes to co-design curricula with students, ensuring accessibility, cultural inclusion, and representation are integral to learning and professional environments.

4. Intersectional Support in Practice

- We will use data and student insight to identify compounded disadvantage where overlapping barriers exist, alongside targeted listening with students.
- EDI training will move beyond individual protected characteristics to empower staff to recognise cumulative disadvantage and adapt core processes to better meet the needs of students navigating multiple identities or support needs.



Accountability

Responsibility for delivery sits across senior leadership, academic departments, professional services, and students, reinforcing EDI as a shared institutional responsibility. Established student facing governance structures ensure meaningful insight and representation across the University: Academic Board committees, Faculty and Department boards, student insight and representation systems, Student Services, and the Students' Union all contribute to strengthening student voice and informing strategic and operational decision making.

We will take an evidence-informed approach, combining quantitative data with student insight to understand lived experience and track the impact of our interventions.

We will monitor progress and impact through:

- routine analysis of equity gaps across the student learning journey;
- evaluation of initiatives using both outcome measures and student feedback;
- targeted listening with students experiencing compounded disadvantage;
- transparent sharing of progress, challenges, and learning;
- an annual review of role responsibilities and staff performance;
- annual analysis of staff targets and success in relation to EDI and student experience, teaching and learning, assessment, and quality processes;
- inclusive leadership by example, in order to champion the conditions for culture change.

Aspiration

We are committed to creating a working environment in which all colleagues can bring their whole selves to work, feel valued, supported, and able to thrive. Our ambition is not only to diversify our workforce, but to ensure that inclusion, wellbeing, and equitable opportunity are embedded in everyday practice. This is equally reflected in the University strategy principle of 'place and belonging'.

Across all of our people and culture activity - recruitment, development, progression, and leadership - we will look to enhance and strengthen ownership at every level, ensuring that equity principles are consistently applied across faculties and professional services. We recognise that fairness does not always mean sameness. Equity requires informed, proportionate, and sometimes targeted support.

We will continue to build a People and Culture model in which:

- inclusive leadership is expected and developed;
- data about our people and their experiences inform decision-making;
- recruitment, progression, and promotion pathways will continue to follow the principles of transparency;
- equitable wellbeing continues to be a strategic priority as a Mindful Employer;
- EDI is understood as a shared institutional responsibility, not solely a Human Resources or governance function.

Edge Hill's recognised trade unions and staff networks play an important role in supporting a positive working culture and contributing to organisational change. Through constructive engagement, they provide valuable insight into staff experience and help ensure that policies, processes, and workplace initiatives are fair, inclusive, and informed by those they affect.

The University affirms its commitment to race equity and anti-racist practice. We are a hate crime reporting centre. During this strategy period, we will actively engage with external race equality frameworks, ensuring that progress is informed by evidence, lived experience, and external challenge.



Our Theory of Change

Insight: As a growing and evolving institution, we recognise that colleagues may experience intersecting demands related to workload, wellbeing, inclusion, and progression. By understanding these pressures, we are better able to design systems that support engagement, retention, and career development.

We believe staff wellbeing and belonging improve when we:

- foster safe, inclusive working environments supported by visible leadership;
- embed equity into recruitment, development, performance, and progression processes;
- use transparent workload allocation models across the institution;
- use data about our people and their lived experience to identify and address structural barriers;
- equip managers and teams with clear expectations, training, and support to foster confidence for inclusive practice;
- maintain a fair, competitive, and transparent offer in relation to staff rewards, wellbeing support, and recognition.

These actions create the conditions for:

- increased engagement and sense of belonging;
- improved wellbeing and retention;
- clearer progression pathways and leadership readiness.

Which in turn enables:

- sustained and sustainable improvements in the diversity of our people;
- increased representation in leadership roles;
- improved staff experience across the employee lifecycle.

Action

Building on our strong foundations, we will focus on four interlinked key priorities:

1. Inclusive Leadership and Shared Ownership

- We will strengthen executive and faculty-level sponsorship of EDI priorities, ensuring clear roles, resources, decision-making responsibilities, and accountability for delivery.
- We will ensure leaders are developed and supported to inspire confidence in inclusive leadership.
- Inclusive leadership principles will be embedded within leadership development programmes, management expectations, and accountability.
- Equality Impact Assessments will remain standard practice for major decisions, structural reviews, and policy changes, supported by accessible guidance and training, and with built-in mechanisms to ensure completion.
- EDI objectives will be embedded within performance development review processes to reinforce shared responsibility across all staff areas.
- A member of the University Senior Leadership Group will sponsor staff networks, to highlight the importance of these groups in strengthening belonging and visibility.

2. Equitable Recruitment, Progression and Representation

- To ensure consistency, fairness, and diversity across the employee lifecycle, we will continue to refine inclusive recruitment practices, including the use of diverse panels, inclusive job design, and proactive outreach, in order to engage candidates from a broader range of backgrounds.
- We will continue to use data about our people to monitor representation, progression, and senior pay review outcomes, identifying disparities and addressing structural barriers.
- Targeted mentoring, sponsorship, and career development initiatives will support underrepresented groups in progressing to leadership and senior academic roles.
- For professional, technical, and support staff, we will career development pathways, as well as enhancing the continuing professional development offer.
- We will move from consultation to co-creation, where appropriate, involving staff in designing policies, services, and interventions to ensure they reflect lived experience and meet diverse needs.

3. Health, Wellbeing and Flexible Working

- Building on the impact of the Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, we will continue to broaden our strategic focus to encompass broader health and wellbeing priorities, including men's health, disability and neurodiversity inclusion, and caring responsibilities.
- We will maintain a supportive and responsive approach to agile working, recognising its importance for retention, productivity, and wellbeing.
- Family-friendly policies will continue to evolve in line with legislative changes and staff insight.
- Organisational wellbeing initiatives will be informed by staff survey data, pulse surveys, and targeted research, ensuring interventions are evidence-led rather than assumption-driven.

4. Data Maturity and Intersectional Insight

- We will engage with race equality frameworks to support evaluation and action planning, in order to demonstrate commitment to race equity and anti-racist practice.
- Real-time dashboards will continue to support senior leaders in understanding workforce trends and monitoring progress against strategic priorities.
- We will enhance methods of demographic data collection to enable sophisticated intersectional analysis.
- Where data gaps exist due to low disclosure, including disability, socio-economic background, and caring responsibilities, we will take proportionate steps to improve insight. We will communicate explicitly why demographic data is collected and how confidentiality is protected in order to help staff feel safe to disclose, and ensure intersectional insights are meaningful.



Accountability

Responsibility for delivering this agenda sits across senior leadership, faculties, and professional services. Established governance structures ensure strategic and operational insight: HR, Student Services, Facilities Management, the EDI Steering Group, and institutional charter committees. Equally, our continued commitment to Athena Swan progression, alongside monitoring of the Gender Pay Gap and the demographics of staff, will provide structured frameworks and external benchmarks for sustained improvement.

We will monitor progress and impact through:

- annual staff diversity and pay gap reporting;
- external charter recognition and associated action plans;
- analysis of recruitment, progression, and Senior Pay Review outcomes;
- staff surveys relating to inclusion, belonging, and wellbeing;
- monitoring of flexible working uptake and family-friendly policy utilisation;
- evaluation of EDI Innovation Fund initiatives and staff network engagement.

Through strengthened governance, clearer ownership, and sustained leadership commitment, we will ensure that equity, diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing are embedded within the systems, behaviours, and culture that shape the everyday experience of working at Edge Hill University.

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Inclusive Organisational Culture

Aspiration

We will strengthen the University's capability to deliver high-quality, evidence-informed, equity, diversity, wellbeing, and inclusion outcomes over time. We view inclusive organisational culture as the enabler and staff wellbeing and belonging as the lived outcome.

Our ambition is to strengthen EDI within leadership, governance, and everyday systems, ensuring responsibility is clear, ownership is visible, and impact is measurable. This includes strengthening governance and executive accountability, mobilising research-informed expertise, benchmarking against sector standards, and ensuring equity is consistently applied across academic and professional services. This aspiration reflects our commitment to key principles in our University Strategy (2026-2031), including 'sustainable growth', 'professional futures' and 'place and belonging'.

Our simple aim is to move from activity to assurance, and to translate ambition into change.



Our Theory of Change

Insight: Organisational culture is shaped by leadership behaviours, governance systems, and everyday practices. Sustaining consistency across faculties and services requires continued clarity of ownership, shared expectations, and evidence-informed decision-making.

We believe organisational culture improves when we:

- ensure executive and senior ownership of EDI is explicit and sustained;
- share roles and responsibilities clearly across faculties and services;
- embed inclusive practice within performance, quality, and governance systems;
- support staff with practical frameworks, development, and expectations;
- use data and lived experience together to guide decision-making;
- review progress routinely and act on learning;
- live our values consistently, embedding them in everyday behaviours, decisions, and interactions so they are reflected in how we lead, support, and work with one another.

These actions create the conditions for:

- greater consistency of inclusive practice across the institution;
- increased confidence among staff and leaders;
- clearer accountability for EDI outcomes.

Which in turn enables:

- sustained and sustainable cultural change;
- improved trust and belonging;
- a University environment that continues to mature.

Action

Building on our strong foundations, we will focus on four interlinked key priorities:

1. Inclusive Leadership and Shared Ownership

- We will establish clear executive sponsorship of EDI priorities, supported by defined roles and authoritative decision rights and escalation routes.
- We will strengthen EDI within existing governance structures, ensuring committees move from oversight to impact.
- We will align EDI and WASS governance to support student success, with ownership and information sharing at institutional, faculty, and service levels.
- We will continue to use Equality Impact Assessments as standard practice for major decisions, policy changes, and structural reviews, with clear expectations for quality and reporting, and with built-in mechanisms to ensure completion.
- We will offer a reciprocal mentoring scheme to senior leaders and governors, in which managers and leaders are able to learn from the lived experiences of colleagues and/or students, in order to improve understanding and support mechanisms for full inclusion.

2. Responsibility within Everyday Systems

- We will ensure EDI is embedded within academic areas and professional services, with expectations reflected in both behaviours and objectives, monitored through performance review processes.
- We will reduce reliance on informal advocacy by strengthening formal processes, defined roles, and the accountability and resourcing that underpin them.
- We will prioritise fewer, higher-impact interventions, with clearer planning, sequencing, and ownership of delivery.

3. Institutional Capability for Inclusive Practice

- We will strengthen staff confidence and consistency in inclusive practice through targeted development, clear expectations, and practical guidance.
- We will support leaders and teams to apply equity in decision-making, teaching, service delivery, and people management.
- We will use real-time demographic and outcomes dashboards to inform local and institutional action.

4. Co-creation, Insight, and Feedback

- We will move from consultation to structured co-creation with students and staff.
- We will continue to collaborate with staff and students' unions to strengthen dialogue, co-create solutions, and support positive change.
- We will strengthen the role of staff networks and EDI Ambassadors in shaping policy, practice, and evaluation.
- We will consolidate clear feedback loops so staff and students can see how engagement leads to change.



Accountability

Responsibility for organisational culture sits across the institution, led by the Executive and Senior Leadership Group, including HR.

We will monitor progress and impact through:

- executive sponsorship and senior ownership of EDI priorities;
- routine reporting through departmental, faculty, and governance committees;
- completion and quality of Equality Impact Assessments;
- workforce and student dashboards;
- staff confidence through pulse surveys;
- evaluation of EDI Innovation Fund projects and network activity;
- annual review of leadership responsibilities and performance objectives.

Aspiration

In order to address the most pressing educational, social, cultural, political, environmental, technological, and scientific changes, the University will continue to embed EDI across all its research and knowledge exchange activities (RKE), communities, and partnerships. This will be evidenced by increased representation, inclusive research cultures, and leadership pathways that reflect the full diversity of our research projects and communities. We recognise that diverse leadership and inclusive research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange cultures enhance innovation, broaden participation through co-production, and improve the quality of reach and impact.

Our approach will directly inform our 2029 REF Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) narratives, demonstrating how inclusive research cultures, equitable career pathways, and diverse leadership strengthen research excellence and impact. Therefore, progress will be measured through monitoring and evaluation frameworks which will feed into the REF submission, demonstrating best practice and distance travelled. EDI will be incorporated through internal core data streams, and researcher development programmes. We will ensure reflective engagement with the Knowledge Exchange Framework. As a University, we intentionally seek to integrate Knowledge Exchange activity wherever research is undertaken, reinforcing Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) as a connected system. This aspiration reflects our commitment to key principles in our University Strategy (2026-2031), including 'sustainable growth', 'professional futures' and 'ideas into action'.



Our Theory of Change

Insight: As we continue to strengthen our research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange profile, we recognise that participation and progression across the sector are not always fully representative. By addressing structural barriers and uneven access to opportunity, we can further enhance who leads, who participates, and whose knowledge is valued.

We believe improvements in research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange diversity and inclusion come when we:

- embed inclusion as a core component of research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange excellence, ensuring leaders actively champion and model equitable practice;
- integrate inclusive practices throughout the research cycle, from design through to dissemination;
- strengthen structures that support diverse research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange activity;
- increase diversity of staff in research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange leadership roles;
- use data to identify, reduce, and close gaps in participation, inclusive selection processes, and progression;
- collaborate with external partners to embed shared EDI standards and inclusive engagement approaches.

These actions create the conditions for:

- broader participation across disciplines and collaborations;
- more inclusive research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange cultures;
- clearer and more equitable progression pathways.

Which in turn enables:

- diverse leadership representation;
- equitable access to research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange opportunities;
- strengthened quality, reach, and impact of research and innovation.

Action

Building on our strong foundations, we will focus on three interlinked key priorities:

1. Inclusive Research Leadership and Pathways

- We will strengthen inclusive research career pathways, with particular attention to postgraduate researchers, postdoctoral and early-career researchers, and colleagues progressing into research leadership.
- We will ensure that opportunity, workload allocation, and access to development are equitable and transparent.
- We will identify and address career progression barriers for under-represented groups in academic and research leadership roles.
- We will make expectations for inclusive research leadership visible in appointment, promotion, and workload processes.
- We will draw on evidence bases and best practice guidance to create targeted formal mentoring networks for senior researchers and those aspiring to senior research positions who are under-represented.

2. Embedding EDI in Research and Enterprise Practice

- We will support researchers to build inclusion into research design, collaboration and engagement processes through practical guidance and capability support.
- We will embed EDI and Athena Swan principles into all research institutes, centres, and group activity, with annual monitoring.
- We will strengthen the use of the Research Investment Fund (RIF) as an internal funding scheme which prioritises early-career researchers, returners from extended periods of leave and secondment. Equally, RIF can help support and prioritise diversity of thought by supporting networking opportunities with other institutions/countries.
- We will align our partnership practice with the Knowledge Exchange Concordat, embedding its principles of collaboration, transparency, inclusion, and mutual benefit within RKE activity. This will provide a consistent framework for inclusive and equitable engagement with external partners.
- We will provide guidance to support inclusive co-creation and accessible engagement with external partners.

3. Data, Evaluation and Transparency

- We will improve data collection and intersectional analysis of staff across research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange, from postgraduate researchers (PGRs) to leadership roles.
- We will track representation in grant applications, awards, research income, enterprise, and knowledge exchange activities, acting on findings to remove barriers and strengthen equity across these areas.
- We will use data and lived experience to understand patterns in research funding success, leadership representation, and progression, taking targeted action where disparities persist.



Accountability

Responsibility for EDI outcomes sits with the Executive, Research Office, Knowledge Exchange Office, research directors, and professional services supporting research, knowledge exchange, and enterprise.

We will monitor progress and impact through:

- dedicated internal measures on EDI;
- reflective engagement with Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and Research Excellence Framework (REF);
- internal diversity and inclusion data for staff and leadership roles in research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange;
- reports on performance submitted to governance committees and published where appropriate;
- monitoring of career pathways and progression outcomes for PGRs, early-career researchers and researchers from under-represented groups;
- embedding EDI frameworks into the annual reporting of research institutes, centres, and groups.

